XI-20

# PASTORAL LETTER

OF

## HIS GRACE

## The Archbishop of Toronto,

ON

# MODERN INFIDELITY.

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# PASTORAL LETTER

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JOHN JOSEPH LYNCH, by the Grace of God and Authority of the Holy See, Archbishop of Toronto, Assistant at the Pontifical Throne, &c., &c.

*To the Beloved Clergy, Religious Communities and Faithful of the Diocese, Grace and Blessing in our Lord.*

Some time ago, we took occasion to warn our youth against a most pernicious sect of Atheists, or, as they are sometimes called, Free-thinkers. Their tenets aim at the destruction of the moral and social instincts of our noble nature, in setting aside the idea of God our Creator. There is little hope of the conversion of an Apostate Catholic who had the inestimable advantage of receiving the light of Faith and the most blessed Sacraments of Christ. The sin of denying the existence of God, and the Redemption of mankind by His Divine Son, is too enormous in one enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul says of them, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; have moreover tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance, crucifying again to themselves the Son of God and making him a mockery." (Heb. vi., 4, &c.) We may say also with Christ our Lord that "the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Matt. xii., 45.) Human pride in this case, like the sin of the angels who rebelled against God in Paradise, is enormous, and the unfortunate apostates, imitating those demons, are too proud to repent or to ask pardon of God. Hence their conversion is so difficult, nay almost impossible.

WE WRITE NOT FOR THEM

but to warn others against the dangers of reading infidel books, or attending lectures, or keeping the company of apostates and infidels. We say with St. John, "Whosoever revolteth, and continueth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that continueth in the doctrine, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house, nor say to him God speed you." (ii. John, i., 9. 10.) Modern infidelity is worse than the old paganism, and requires a greater amount of hellish pride since it has the audacity to raise itself up against an infinitely good God, whom the very barbarians acknowledge and reverence in some way. No young Christian ever came to that state of mental turpitude of denying God without first having been corrupted by bad

literature or evil compauions, agents of the infernal spirits, who perverted his once innocent and confiding heart.

Let us examine on what grounds these alleged infidels deny the existence of God. We call them *alleged* infidels for we can not persuade ourselves that,at the bottom of their hearts, with their early instruction, they sincerely disbelieve in God. In their pride and conceit, the free-thinkers pretend to deny the existence of God, because indeed they do not see Him with their corporal eyes. "No man can see God and live." God is seen in the work of His creation all around us. As we read in the Book of Wisdom, "All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God : and who by these good things that are seen, could not understand him that is, neither by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the workman : But have imagined either the fire, or the wind, or the swift air,or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon, to be the gods that rule the world. With whose beauty if they being delighted, took them to be gods : let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they ; for the first author of beauty made all those things ; or if they admired their power and their effects, let them understand by them, that He that made them is mightier than they. For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby. But yet as to these they are less to be blamed. For they, perhaps, err seeking God, and desirous to find him. For being conversant among his works, they search : and they are persuaded that the things are good which are seen. But, then again, they are not to be pardoned. For if they were able to know so much, as to make a judgment of the world: how did they not more easily find out the Lord thereof? (Wisdom xiii., 1, 9.) St. Paul likewise speaking of the old pagans says : "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made : his eternal power also and divinity : so that *they are inexcusable*. Because that, when they knew good, they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks: but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Rom. i., 20, 21).

INFIDELS ASK FOR PROOFS

of the existence of God. Behold them from the book of Wisdom and from St. Paul. None other than a Being self-existing by his own force and necessary from eternity could be the creator and director of this world on which we are permitted to live, and of the innumerable spheres of stupendous magnitude thrown into space, and moving with incomprehensible force, order and exactness amongst the myriads of other worlds, which we can see on a starry night. Could all this be the effect of chance or of blind force in matter inert in itself, shaking and evoluting from eternity? Perfect order, symmetry and beauty could not be the effect of mere chance, as chaos and confusion could not be the ultimate effect of an all-wise cause. Take the formation of flowers with their beauty, variety, odour and seasons, could they be the effect, in their incipient state, of mere chance, or the trees, with their sap and seeds in proper times and seasons? And again, which was first? the seed having all the essential properties of a tree with seeds to produce other trees, or the tree itself with its seed? The egg and the bird—The bird comes from an egg, and the egg from a bird, which was first? Philosophers are much embarrassed at such questions, but they require a solution.

THERE MUST BE A FIRST CAUSE

for everything, and an intelligent cause that can work from end to end, governing and sustaining all things and their movements. Take the mechanism of our own body. Suppose that we had to govern and regulate it in every particular—we would forget to pump the blood through the heart and to purify it, to direct the nervous system and the digestive organs and eye sight. In the growth and change of parts and substances we supply the food, but after that what or who regulates all the rest? If we were left to ourselves for one hour our whole system would break up. People who say that all this is the effect of

chance suppose effects without sufficient causes.

THE MOSAIC ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

is the only one that satisfies the reasonable being. It has stood the test of criticism for hundreds of years, and all the apparently insurmountable difficulties presented against it by old and modern pagans have been satisfactorily answered, for all reasonable men.

God created all things in the beginning of the world in their mature state as related in Genesis. On the third day of creation He said, "Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and such as may seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, which may have seed in itself upon the earth." (Gen. i., 2.) This is simple and reasonable account of production—Why do infidels to set aside the idea of God the creator have recourse to the most foolish and absurd hallucinations that indeed matter is from eternity, and that the beautiful order of things that we see is the effect of evolution?

IF MATTER BE ETERNAL

it had no beginning and will have no end. Matter existed, exists, and since there is no future in eternity as there is no beginning, matter that we see at present is, according to these Atheists, existing in the future, which is absurd. This world or time, is as it were, a little island or speck in the ocean of infinite space or eternity. It had a beginning, it exists at present, it changes, but that which is eternal does not change.

Tell a printer's boy that on the principle of evolution if he shake leaden ore in a bag for a long time, it will, by the force of shaking, form itself into letters of the alphabet, and he will ask you, how long is it since you escaped from the lunatic asylum. It appeared to us an imposition on common sense and a most unreasonable loss of time, when we began to study Philosophy to refute theories of so called philosophers. Pyrrho tor instance denied the existence of bodies, yet when he received a blow he avoided a second—and Descartes would have us doubt of everything, except perhaps of hunger, or pain when he felt it himself. The Holy Spirit tells us how to treat these men. "Answer a fool according to his folly lest he imagine himself to be wise. (Prov. xxvi., 5).

These men pretend to deny the existence of God and yet they assert that matter possesses all divine attributes, and also pretend that science is on their side. Science as far as it is known, and proved to be true, goes hand in hand with revealed truth. The conglomeration of their absurdities *they* call science, and then build on that system the most incongruous schemes in order to account for this world, and all that is in it. They account for the soul of man in a most silly fashion. Infidel physicians sometimes foolishly exclaim, "I often dissected a body but I never found the soul in it." It is to be presumed that these wise doctors did not dissect a living body with a soul in it. They often operated on living bodies, and they did not *see* the pain they caused.

But how account for animal life and its reproduction, the wonderful construction of man's body with its system of nerves, of circulation, vision, hearing, &c., and how account for his noble intelligence and memory, the most extraordinary of all, his inventive genius and other spiritual faculties? Could all this be produced by the shaking together of matter, of globules, molecules, and atoms? How absurd!

THE STORY OF HUMAN EVOLUTION

from matter implies a material soul, a blind factor in man's actions, and quite incapable of any moral responsibility. Let us try to imagine a mother educating her son in the principles of the Atheists, and let us see the difficulties she will have with him, when, persuaded of his own freedom and in the pride of his individuality, with sulk and stubbornness he begins early to think for himself.

Souls that are degraded by vice and immorality deny immortality. What Atheists assert on their own authority without proof we can deny on ours without proof either. Can these would-be philosophers give us some proof of the eternity of matter and that the order of this world was the product of evolution by citing pages of the world's history written in the fossils and strata or drifts,

Have half formed trees, plants animals and incipient monkeys been found? If man were the product of trees, then there should be found trees turned into the trunk of a man and the branches turned into his limbs. They reason that from analogy, and say boys find great delight in climbing trees, and in this they show that they must have sprung from monkeys—and chamois goats therefore must be sprung from rocks and houses, for in their native home of Switzerland, they love to skip from rock to rock and delight in jumping on the roofs of the cabins and cottages. But enough of this nonsense.

The old pagans did not abandon all sense and reason. They acknowledged first principles. They believed in a great Creator of all things—they erred of course in deductions They believed in worshipping God and offered sacrifice, believed in future rewards and punishments. The reverential qualities of man, universal and deep till violently uprooted by repeated shocks from infidel teaching and depraved human nature, prove that man, from his own reasonable soul made to the image and likeness of God, acknowledges and -erences him.

THE COIN OF GOD,

as St. Augustin calls us, has not entirely lost the impress of its divine mintage. The immortal soul still retains, notwithstanding original sin, the stamp of the image of God, still yearns after its origin as an infant for its mother's breast. Nay, the very attacks on His divinity are a proof of his existence. Men do not attack an empty citadel. The best part of the world, the most virtuous, the most learned, the most enlightened, the most influential, believe in God and in Jesus Christ his Son.

The Atheists of the present day *imitate the rebel angels;* they revolt against God and against every idea of a Supreme Being, and in the pride of their sovereign thought and will, ridicule all who will not believe as they do, and like the damned in hell they curse and blaspheme God. What is this but the revolt of pride in its intensity. We can conceive the truth of the saying that if the devils in hell had the humility to ask pardon of God they would obtain it—but no; pride will not submit.

Rationalists want to subject all the works of God to the tribunal of their reason. But reason to be rightly exercised should be exercised in its own sphere. Reason is a gift of God conceded to man to guide him, but not to the investigation of things above his capacity, or to judge of the superior intellect of the Supreme Being. It is most consonant to reason for a child to be directed by his parents, a pupil by his teacher, and a younger person by one more experienced.

Again these men disagree amongst themselves about every important point of their own doctrine, its principles and deductions, yet they want the world to accept their words and give implicit confidence to their ravings.

Atheists pretend that they are sustained by science; yes science of their own conception. They formulate false principles, call them science and then on this false ground heap together a mound of

ABSURDITIES AND EXPLODED HYPOTHESES,

and all to explain away the existence and Providence of God—whom like the demons they hate. These deluded men must be at a great loss to find out the pedigree of their ancestry when they must find it in matter, then in a host of things, then at last ascending the scale, they fall on the monkey, which by the way might mean, "*manqué*" or a failure. True science has never been found at variance with true faith and religion properly known and appreciated. The hobby with many of the present day is a pretended science. Demetrius, the old author of the belief in materialism has been refuted over and over again by the fathers of the Church.

The question is a grand one: whence do I come? Whither do I go? The christian says we come from God, the self-existent, and most noble Creator of all things, and we go to enjoy His glorious company for eternity The materialist will say—we came from a monkey and we are going . . . *no where.* Not only the fathers of the Church, but councils, bishops in the pastoral instructions, and learned men of the past ages have refuted these foolish hallucinations of very unwise

men. We will be pardoned by all who love the truth and do not fear to hear it, when we say that the principle of Luther proclaimed from so called Christian pulpits, that every man may interpret the Bible as he pleases, and is his own judge, setting aside all authority in religious matters,

WAS THE GERM WHENCE AROSE

and spread the free-thought and infidelity which now prey on the vitals of Christianity especially amongst the followers of Luther. Not long ago a Rev. Professor in this city, whom I need not name but whose lecture appeared in the *Globe*, and was not reproved by his church, boldly asserted the supremacy of human reason over faith or the word of God. He is reported to have said, "the pious rant, I believe it, though I cannot understand it, or although it seems absurd, is superstitious blasphemy." Does this Rev. gentleman deny the Holy Trinity? It is an article of faith in any church calling itself Christian. He must do so if he calls it superstitious blasphemy.

IT IS THE NOBLEST EXERCISE OF HUMAN REASON

to submit itself and believe truths enunciated by Divine authority. Does it degrade the child to keep from it sharp weapons? God has revealed himself to man and disclosed to him sublime truths which ennoble the soul, and fill it with the highest aspirations after the eternal good. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in those days hath spoken to us by His Son." (Heb. i., 1, 2) And does it degrade reason to be the pupil of so wise a Master? Certainly not; it is no degradation to believe and to submit to what is true. Have those free-thinkers the certainty of having the monopoly of all the reason and science of the world? and of knowing all truth? Does it degrade reason for a pupil to learn of a wise preceptor? or a child to obey its parents though it may not know the reason?

Those deluded men (there are no women who believe it) who claim for themselves a material and beastly origin, as the seventh species from the ape, pretend to have infinite intelligence, and to account for all things without God, whom they cannot understand. They mount up to the throne of His Majesty and arraign His justice, mercy, and other Divine attributes as though they were human virtues. They proclaim that the great Lord and Master of the universe

SHOULD HAVE NO RIGHT

either to reward his good children or to punish rebels. A child who rebels against a most loving father has less claim on his father's mercy than a common subject. He unjustly claims the exercise of paternal love, who acted the part, not of a child, but of a most ungrateful rebel.

The Atheists reject all faith in God, and in the Bible, and yet they blindly submit their reason to the loudest or most extravagent talker; and think themselves wonderfully wise. Some of the plausible, yet shallow, objections to the justice and mercy of God come from the false interpretation of the texts of the Bible, bearing on faith and predestination. Some have said, "Faith alone will save you, no matter how reprobate you might stand before the judgment of God." This, of course, must be repugnant to justice and right. A man is struck down instantly in the midst of his sins without time to repent, but he has faith in Christ. To say that that man

MUST BE SAVED,

gives a grievous objection to the infidel. And again the doctrine that God predestines some to be lost, independently of their committing sin, is simply atrocious, gives a lever of great power into the hands of the infidels, and swells their ranks. And yet these doctrines are preached from so-called Christian pulpits.

Our Lord in his foreknowledge of the world asks this very pertinent question: "The son of man when He cometh shall He find, think you, faith on earth?" (Luke xviii., 18.) He did not say *truth*. His divine goodness will find that in His Church, which He established to teach all truth, guiding and directing to the end of time. "Heaven and earth will pass away but His word will not pass away."

"God has given up the world to the consideration of men," (Eccl. iii., 11.) that in their consideration of it, its author may be known. True science is never in conflict with the revelation of God to man, or with his works.

THEY GO HAND IN HAND.

A true philosopher finds his greatest joy and glory in adoring the God who created and governs this wonderful order of things, for no rational man can accept the grotesque and incongruous inventions of so-called scientists.

The Catholic Church, ever watchful to guard her children, sets forth as follows, in the Decrees of the Council of the Vatican, the Catholic belief regarding creation :—

1st. If any one shall deny that there is one true God, Creator and Lord of things visible and invisible. Let him be anathema.

2nd. If any one shall be so shameless as to say that nothing exists besides matter. Let him be anathema.

3rd. If any one shall say that the substance or the essence of God and of all things, is one and the same. Let him be anathema.

4th. If any one shall say that finite things, both corporal and spiritual, or that at least spiritual things, emanated from the Divine substance.

Or that the Divine substance becomes all things, by manifestation of itself or by evolution.

Or in fine, that God is a universal or indefinite being, which by the determining of itself constitutes the universality of things distinguished into kinds, species and individuals. Let him be anathema.

5th. If any person shall not confess that the world and all things in it contained, both spiritual and material, were in their whole substance produced by God from nothing ; or shall say that God did not create with a will, free from all necessity, but that He created as necessarily as He loves Himself; or shall deny that the world was made for God's glory. Let him be anathema.

How happy the life and death of a good Catholic who obeys the laws of God and of His Holy Church. During life he is buoyed up with the word of God, His merciful promises and in hopes in the merits of His Divine Redeemer. He receives (from time to time) the sacraments of Christ, which cleanse his conscience from sin and strengthen him in his journey to the mountain of God. He has besides the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Communion of Saints, the intercession of the Most Blessed Virgin and of all the saints of God. On the contrary what is the final prospect of an atheist. Blessed indeed would be his lot if his hoped-for annihilation were to come upon him. Alas, not so ! He shall render an account to God for graces thrown away and faith rejected, for a life of rebellion against God, his maker and judge. His life has been a sad mistake, and at the approach of death, how dreary are his prospects. Death to the Catholic is sweet, it brings rest from his labours ; to the infidel it brings fearful misgivings and too often despair.

In view, therefore, of the dreadful evils of infidel teaching we renew the prohibitions already pronounced against any Catholic's attending at infidel meetings ; and hereby proclaim the prohibitions of the Holy See against the use of infidel and immoral literature. We, moreover, reserve to Ourself the absolution from the sin of attending the meetings aforesaid or of reading infidel works.

"But for the rest, dearly beloved brethren, pursue justice, faith, charity, and peace with all that call upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart, and avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they beget strifes."—(II. Tim , ii., 22-23.)

This Pastoral letter shall be read in all the churches and chapels of our diocese on the first Sunday after its reception.

Given at St. Michael's Palace, Toronto, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 4th, 1880.

+ JOHN JOSEPH LYNCH,
*Archbishop of Toronto.*

By order of His Grace the Archbishop.

J. J. McCANN, Priest,
*Secretary.*